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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000462

SIPDIS

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TAGS: NATO PREL MOPS MARR AF SW

SUBJECT: SWedes to propose parliamentary bill on 2010  
Afghanistan Deployments

REF: A. STATE 74362

1B. STOCKHOLM 460 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CDA Robert J. Silverman for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Sweden is increasing its troop presence in Afghanistan to 500 soldiers by year-end. FM Bildt has visited Afghanistan twice in recent months, including the visit July 24 with Amb. Holbrooke. Senior MFA and MOD officials tell us the government is now preparing its annual bill to parliament to extend the deployment. The recent uptick in violence in the northern provinces may dictate that they focus on more troops for the PRT in Mazar, with no increase in mentoring teams beyond the two OMLTS at present. Sweden is also rolling out a new aid strategy for Afghanistan (septel); it currently provides \$63 million in aid per year. We recommend senior State and military engagement with Sweden in September, before submission of the annual troop extension bill to parliament in October. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On July 23, Poloffs discussed Swedish plans for post-election contributions to Afghanistan with Carl Magnus Eriksson, MFA Director for Peace Support Operations, Brigadier General Gunnar Karlson, MFA Military Advisor, and Karin Anderman, Deputy Director in the Department of Security Policy. Magnusson thanked us for the non-paper, saying he would study it carefully. Magnusson reported that a new bill will be presented at the Swedish Parliament this fall regarding Sweden's calendar year 2010 deployments in Afghanistan. "No dramatic changes are expected," he said. Separately, MFA poldir Bjorn Lyrvall told CDA on July 24 that the recent skirmishes in the northern provinces (septel) have the potential to tie up Swedish troops, and restrict the possible expansion of Swedish participation in OMLTS, beyond the two Swedish OMLTS at present.

¶3. (C) MOD Director General for International Security Policy Peter Gothe told Pol Counselor on July 23 that the Swedish MOD and MFA will begin interagency meetings at the end of August to discuss Sweden's future presence in Afghanistan. MOD and MFA will coordinate drafting the parliamentary bill in September. Gothe stated that consultations with U.S. civilian and military experts during this period would be essential. Sweden would be especially eager for consultations with Amb. Holbrooke and his senior staff, he said. On the military side, the new U.S. emphasis on the prevention of civilian casualties was crucial for the Swedish Parliament and public opinion, and that it would be especially helpful if senior U.S. military officials could visit Sweden and speak publicly about the efforts that ISAF is making in this regard.

¶4. (C) On the situation in Afghanistan, Gothe reported that violence in the four northern provinces covered by the Swedish-led PRT has been increasing for the past two years to the point that there are now weekly shootings. Before, the

violence had been mostly the result of criminal activity and only in Pashtun pockets, but now Sweden sees a clear increase in Taliban activity across all northern provinces. Last year, the Norwegians started engaging in heavy fighting and Swedish have been "backfilling" Norwegian positions since then. At present, Sweden leads the PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif and contributes to two OMLTs. Current Swedish ISAF troops number about 430 and will expand to about 500 by the end of the year (reftel B). A Swedish Air Force C-130 has been in operation in Afghanistan since May. Sweden will contribute to the EU election mission, the EUPOL mission, and has pledged USD 63 million in development aid annually over the next three years (ref B).

Comment

15. (C) Comment: Sweden can and should do more in Afghanistan. As the current President of the EU, Swedish actions might also act as a catalyst for action by other Member States. The MOD is enthusiastic about seeing its mission increase, and we note Swedish press reports that 8,000 Swedes in the military reserve have volunteered to fill slots in the latest rotation into Afghanistan (overseas military deployments are done by volunteers here). The optimal time to influence Swedish decisions-makers as they draft the new bill to extend the Afghanistan deployment would be in September or early October. Once the bill is submitted to parliament in late October, it will be hard to change their troops presence next year. Sweden intends to invite NATO's senior civilian representative to Afghanistan Fernando Gentillini to Stockholm in the fall and would very much welcome a visit by

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Amb. Holbrooke as well. On the military side, a visit by either General Petraeus or General McChrystal would be especially important given Sweden's growing awareness of the deteriorating security situation in the North and the public's concerns over civilian casualties.

SILVERMAN